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Diocese of Manchester

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DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER STATEMENT SEPTEMBER 11, 1993

The Roman Catholic Bishop of Manchester issued the following statement through its attorney, Bradford E. Cook of Sheehan Phinney Bass + Green, on September 11, 1993, in response to the writ of summons in a matter entitled David Grover v. Roman Catholic Bishop of Manchester, Inc. et al:

"Having been provided a copy of the writ in the Grover case, and having first heard of it from the press and not by service of process in the normal course, the Church is outraged by the many irresponsible and false charges contained in the document.

"As has been stated on many occasions in the past, the Bishop and the Church are saddened by and grieve with the victims of the alleged actions of Gordon MacRae. However, the Church took appropriate action in relation to him at each stage given what was known at the time, and he was ultimately removed from his status as one who could ever function as a priest again. To try to judge actions of over ten years ago from what is now known is unjust and unfair. The Church denies responsibility and liability for his actions.

"The pleadings supplied to us are inaccurate and sloppy, and misstate the name of the Church and several defendants, facts which are easy to find. More importantly, the irresponsible allegations constitute a frontal assault on the Church as a whole, displaying a lack of knowledge of its organization, functions and nature. Attacks on Church policies such as celibacy as 'against nature' as a basis for legal action are curious, and blanket statements about the action of clergy as a whole contained in the writ are wild and irresponsible and, we believe, defamatory.

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"The Church is a victim of the actions of Gordon MacRae as well as the individuals, and to try to paint the Church and its officials as co-conspirators or those who 'intentionally inflict emotional distress' upon this plaintiff or anyone else is irresponsible and defames them and the good work they have done for years.

"The allegations are inaccurate and illogical. A few examples are: To suggest that Msgr. Watson, who was not assigned to Hampton until June 15, 1983, somehow could have avoided events which allegedly began in the 1970s misstates facts and defies logic. To state that Msgr. Christian assigned MacRae wrongly, when he had no such responsibility, is wrong. To state that Msgr. Quinn, the distinguished head of N.H. Catholic Charities, has authority over priests is incorrect. To state that clergy then, as now, are not evaluated prior to ordination is wrong and easily refuted. In short, these accusations are not based on fact and are so inaccurate that they force us to question their motivation and the method of their becoming public. They are so irresponsible and defamatory that we cannot let them stand unrefuted even though we do not believe such matters should be tried in the press.

"The Church is investigating all of its options in responding to these false charges and will defend itself vigorously against them. It will also defend its officials who have been falsely accused. At the same time, it will continue to cooperate in bringing those who have harmed others to light."

For further information, please contact Attorney Bradford E. Cook.

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